



Department of Justice

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FOUR CHARGED WITH MONEY LAUNDERING FOR ILLEGAL ALIEN SMUGGLING ORGANIZATION

Tampa, Florida- United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton and Susan L. McCormick, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), announce the filing of an Indictment and an Information charging four defendants with laundering the proceeds of an illegal alien smuggling organization to conceal the origins of the money. The investigation that resulted in today's charges, Operation "Brazilian Express," is the culmination of more than a year of federal efforts aimed at dismantling the alien smuggling organization's activities in the Tampa Bay area and other parts of the United States.

According to court documents, the alien-smuggling organization, headed by Edson Veiga (age 51, of Tampa), smuggled illegal aliens, mostly from Brazil, over the Mexican border and into the United States. Veiga has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to alien smuggling and is serving a sentence of 33 months in federal prison after fully cooperating with the investigation.

An estimated 100 illegal aliens were brought into the U.S. during the conspiracy. The organization charged the aliens between \$8,000 and \$10,000 and used the money to pay individuals at various stages of the smuggling operation. It is estimated that Veiga himself made approximately \$1,500 for each successfully smuggled aliens. At least one of the illegal aliens smuggled by the organization, Fabio Fernando Cardoso, was recently deported to Brazil.

The four defendants charged today, all from the Tampa area, are accused of money laundering in connection with Veiga's organization. They are:

JEAN VEIGA (son of Edson Veiga) Age: 27

GABRIEL SMUD Age: 65

MARCOS VIEIRA Age: 52

BRUNO VIEIRA Age: 25

The Indictment and the Information allege that these four opened bank accounts and safety deposit boxes in financial institutions in Tampa and elsewhere, then used the accounts to deposit proceeds from the alien smuggling organization and conducted financial transactions involving the proceeds of the organization for the purpose of concealing and disguising the nature, the location, the source, the ownership and the control of the proceeds of the illegal alien smuggling activities. The Indictment and the Information also allege that the four defendants received payments in exchange for their assistance in laundering the organization's proceeds.

Each defendant faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison. Jean Veiga was charged by Information and has entered into a plea agreement admitting the charge against him. The remaining three defendants were charged in an Indictment handed down by the grand jury.

This case was investigated by ICE and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Edward E. Toro-Font.

An Indictment and an Information are merely formal charges that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.

